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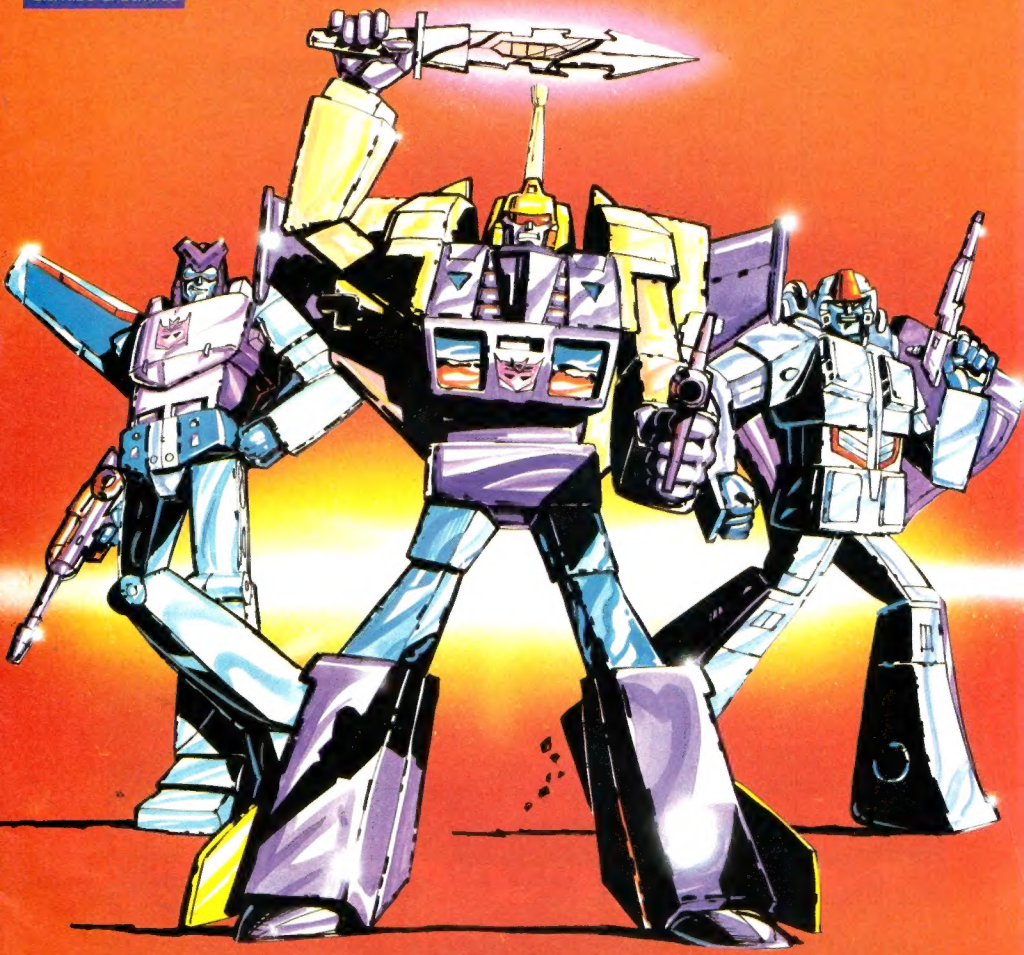
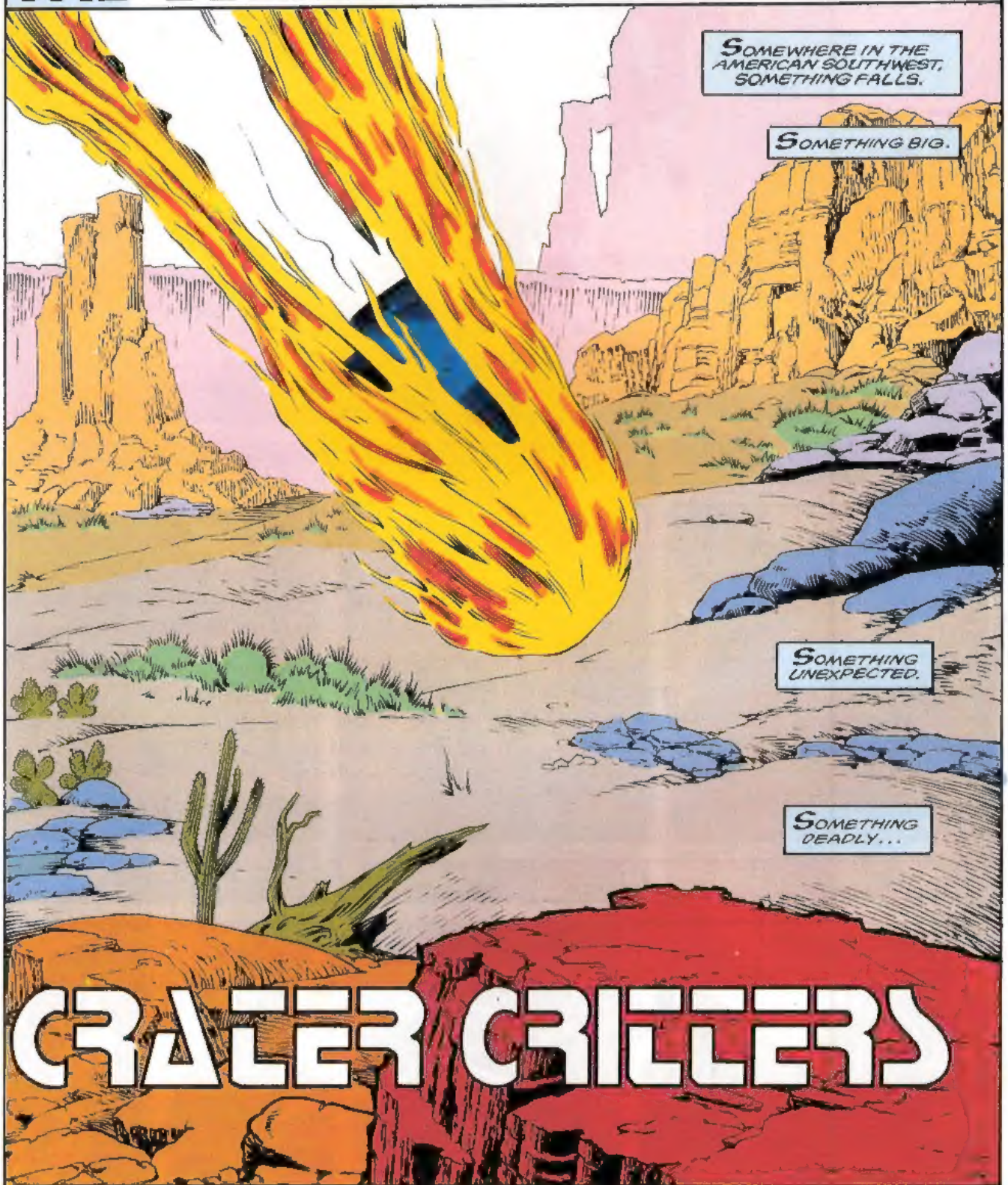
THE TRANSFORMERS™



TROUBLE-TIMES THREE!

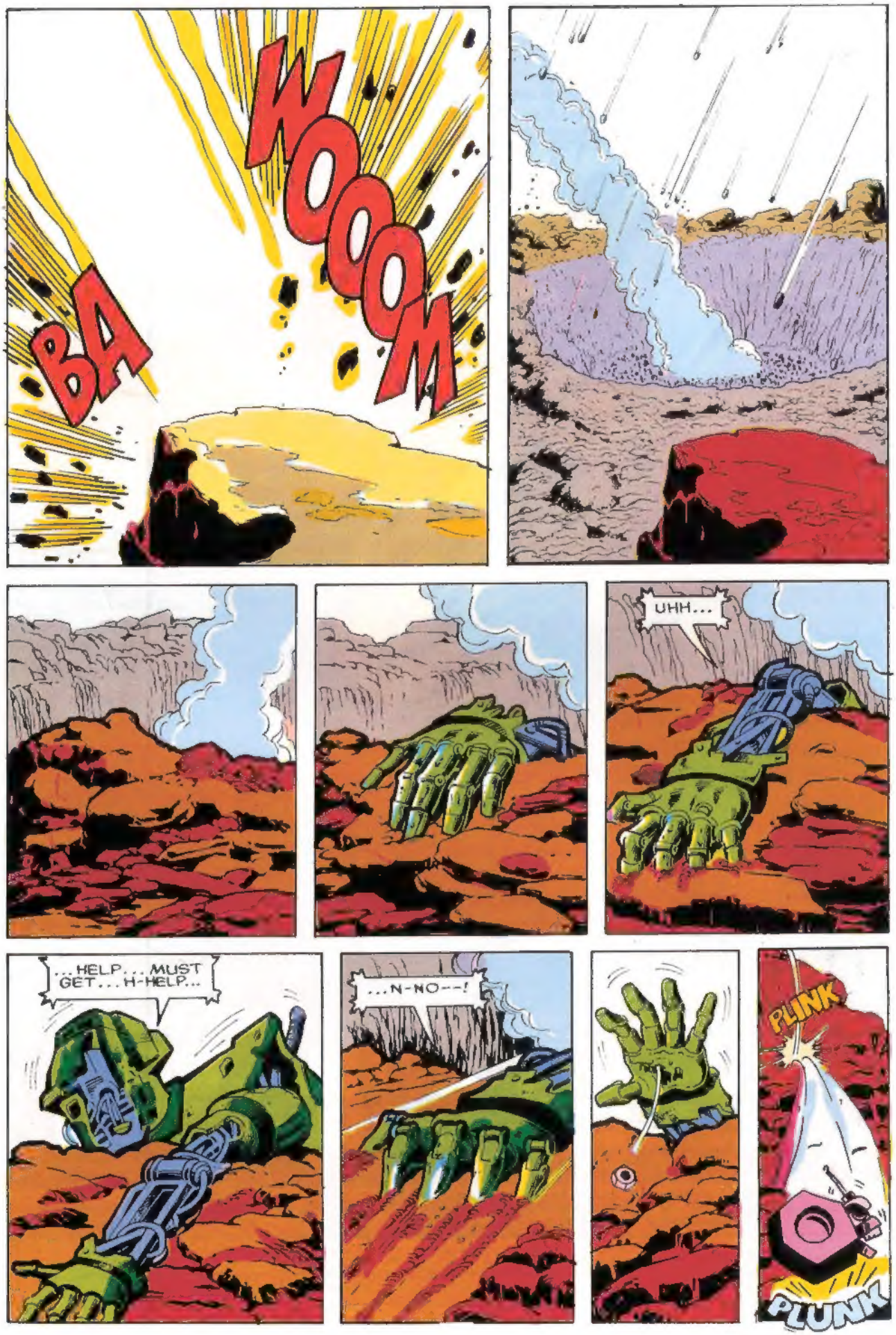
Four million years ago they came from **Cybertron**, a world composed entirely of machinery . . . a world torn by an age-old war between the heroic **Autobots** and the evil **Decepticons**. These incredibly powerful living robots, capable of converting themselves into land and air vehicles, weapons and other mechanical forms, continue their conflict here on **Earth**. They are . . .

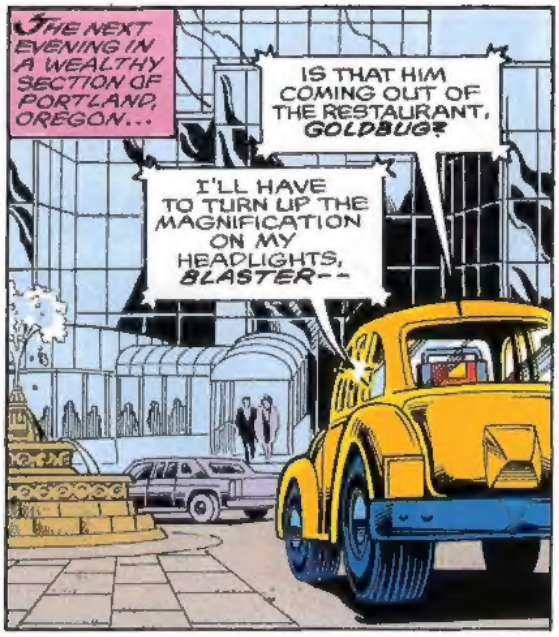
THE TRANSFORMERS



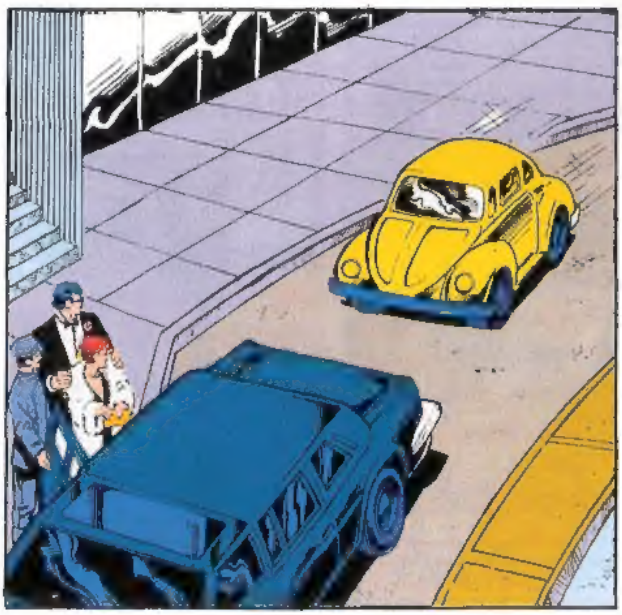
CRATER CRITTERS

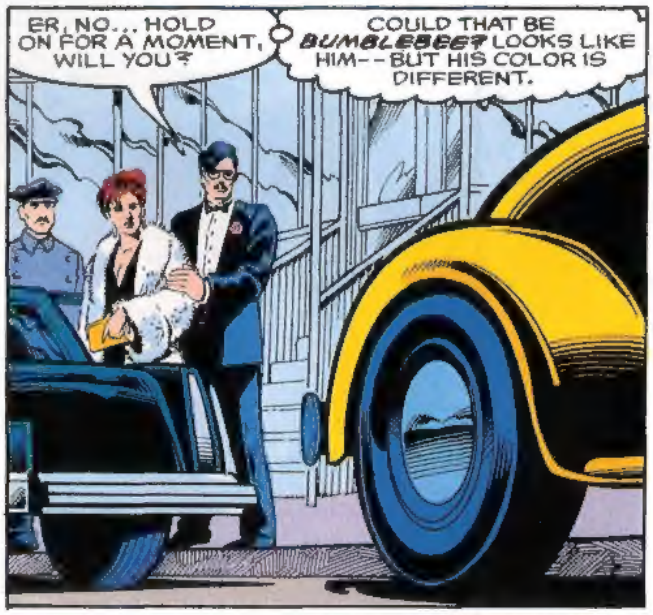
BOB BUDIANSKY WRITER • DON PERLIN BREAKDOWNS • IAN AKIN & BRIAN GARVEY FINISHES • JANICE CHIANG LETTERER • NEL YOMTOV COLORIST • DON DALEY EDITOR • JIM SHOOTER EDITOR IN CHIEF

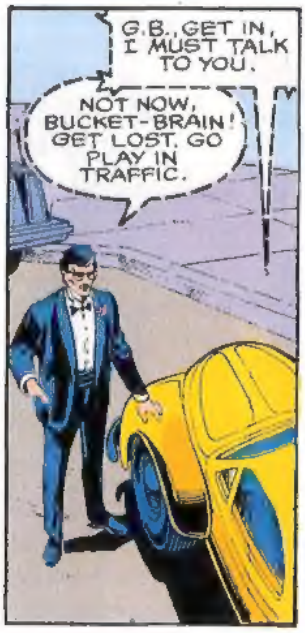

BA
WOOOOM
UHH...
...HELP... MUST GET... H-HELP...
...N-NO--!
PLINK
PLUNK

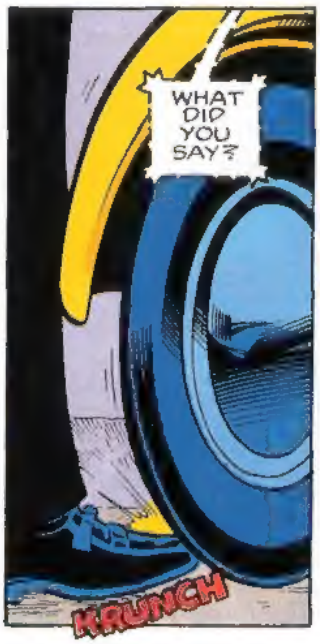

THE NEXT EVENING IN A WEALTHY SECTION OF PORTLAND, OREGON...
IS THAT HIM COMING OUT OF THE RESTAURANT, GOLDBUG?
I'LL HAVE TO TURN UP THE MAGNIFICATION ON MY HEADLIGHTS, BLASTER--

--YES, THAT'S HIM--G.B. BLACKROCK!
BUT I'M STILL NOT SURE THIS IS A GOOD IDEA.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO TURN BUMPER AND DRIVE OFF, WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK NOW! I'M STAYING.
NO, I'M WILLING TO GIVE YOUR PLAN A TRY. HONEST.



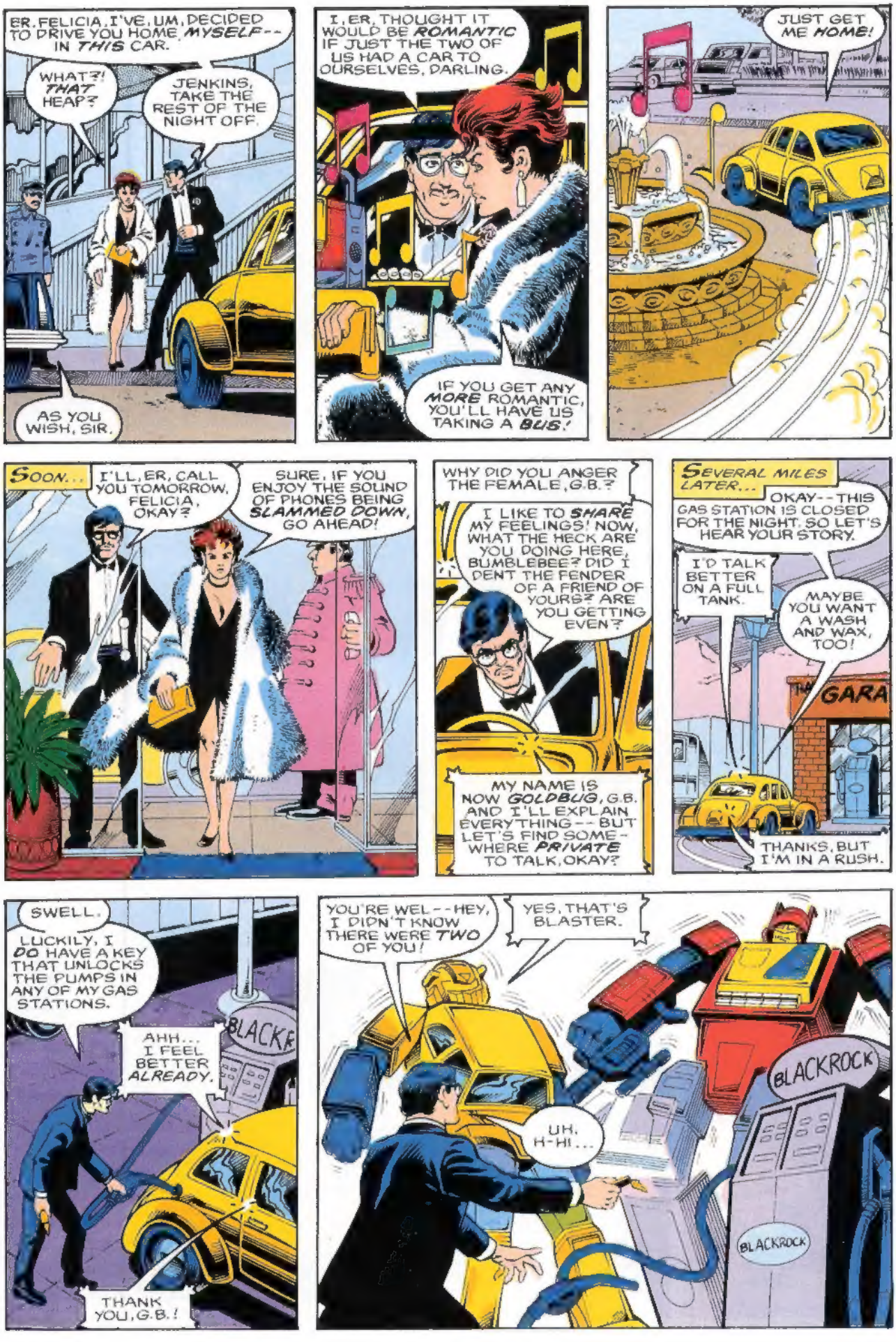

ER, NO... HOLD ON FOR A MOMENT, WILL YOU?
COULD THAT BE BUMBLEBEE? LOOKS LIKE HIM--BUT HIS COLOR IS DIFFERENT.


G.B., GET IN, I MUST TALK TO YOU.
NOT NOW, BUCKET-BRAIN! GET LOST. GO PLAY IN TRAFFIC.

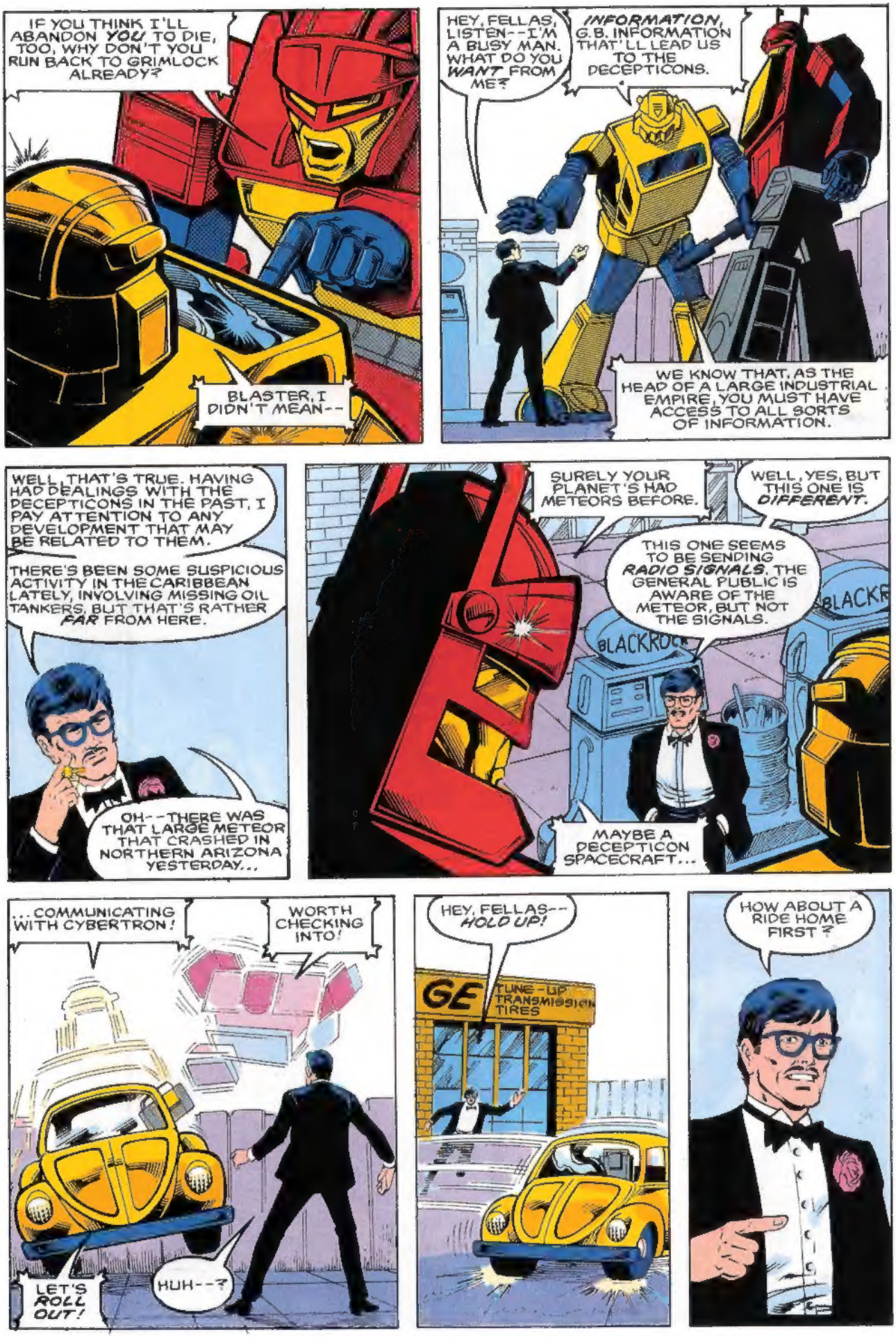

WHAT DID YOU SAY?
KRUNCH

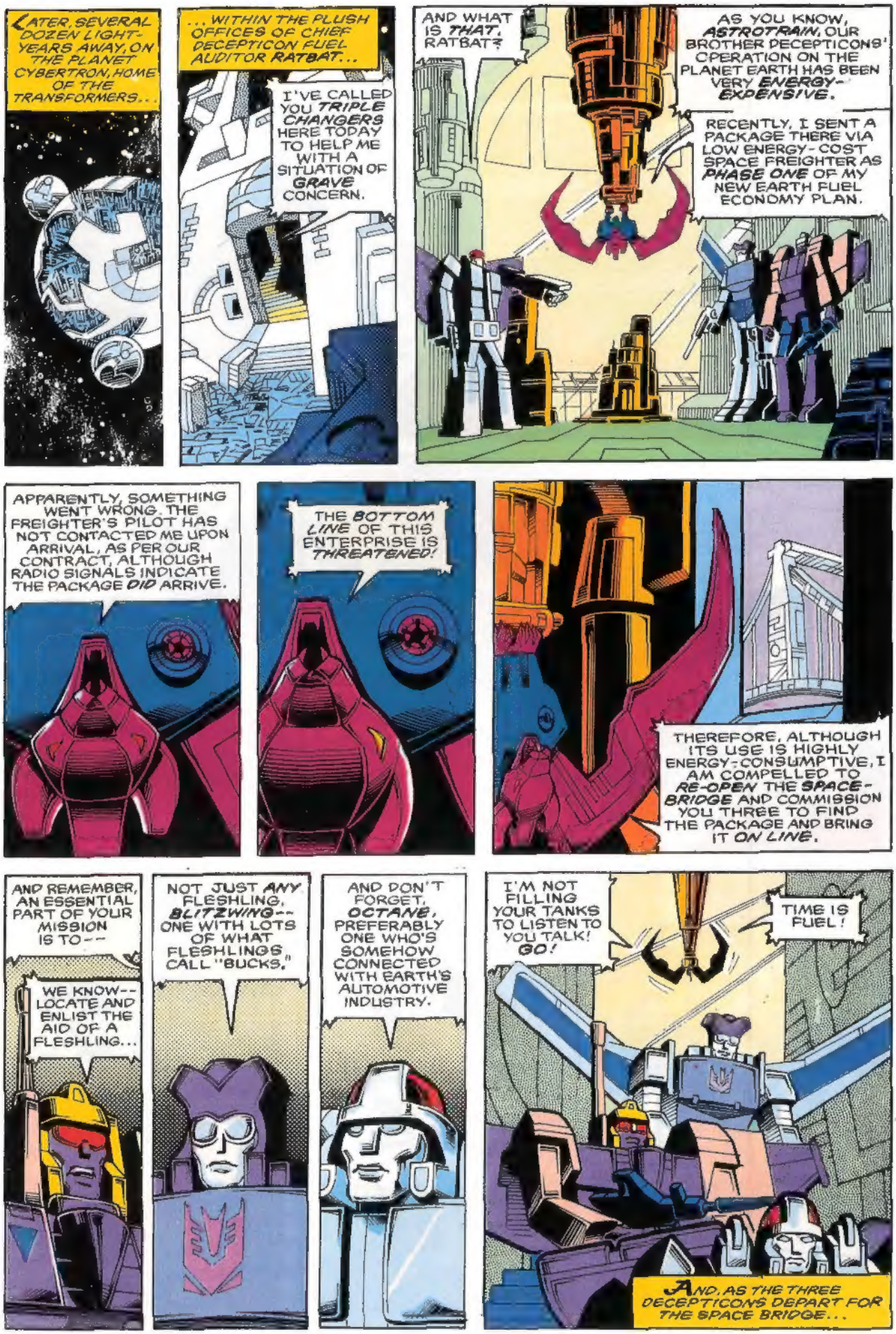
UHN! A-A-ALL R-R-RIGHT... W-WE'LL T-T-TALK...

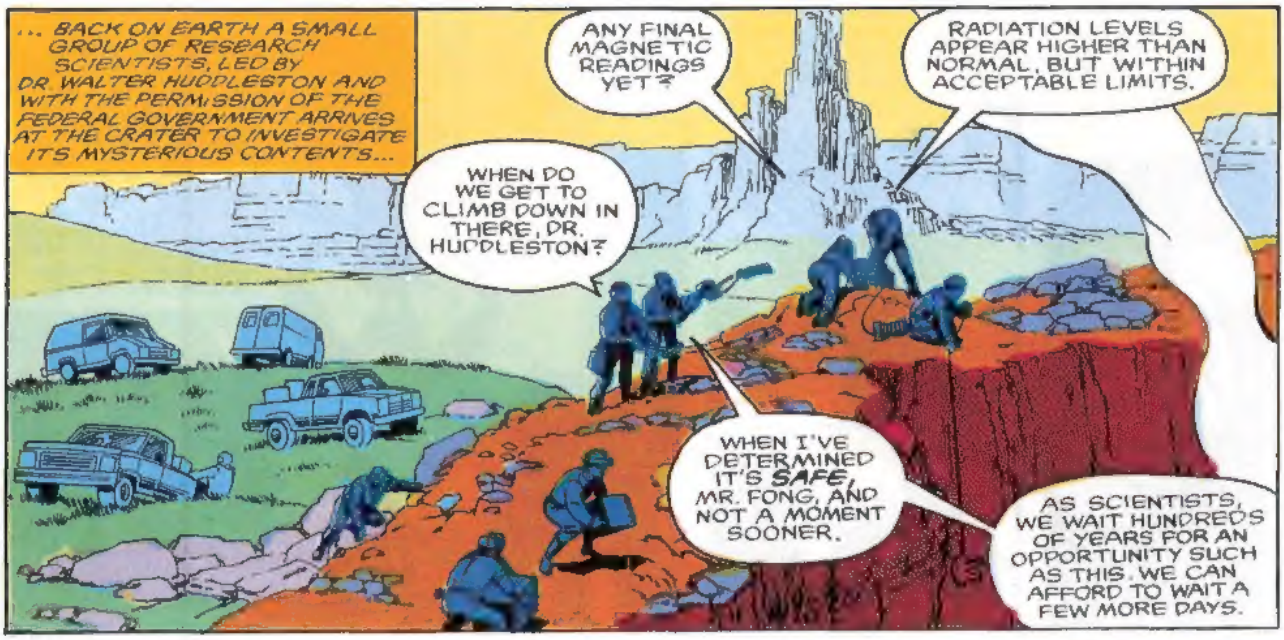
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT YOU SAID.


ER, FELICIA, I'VE, UM, DECIDED TO DRIVE YOU HOME, MYSELF-- IN THIS CAR.
WHAT?! THAT HEAP?
JENKINS, TAKE THE REST OF THE NIGHT OFF.
AS YOU WISH, SIR.
I, ER, THOUGHT IT WOULD BE ROMANTIC IF JUST THE TWO OF US HAD A CAR TO OURSELVES, DARLING.
IF YOU GET ANY MORE ROMANTIC, YOU'LL HAVE US TAKING A BUS!
JUST GET ME HOME!
SOON...
I'LL, ER, CALL YOU TOMORROW, FELICIA, OKAY?
SURE, IF YOU ENJOY THE SOUND OF PHONES BEING SLAMMED DOWN, GO AHEAD!
WHY DID YOU ANGER THE FEMALE, G.B.?
I LIKE TO SHARE MY FEELINGS! NOW, WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING HERE, BUMBLEBEE? DID I DENT THE FENDER OF A FRIEND OF YOURS? ARE YOU GETTING EVEN?
MY NAME IS NOW GOLDBUG, G.B. AND I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING -- BUT LET'S FIND SOMEWHERE PRIVATE TO TALK, OKAY?
SEVERAL MILES LATER...
OKAY -- THIS GAS STATION IS CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT, SO LET'S HEAR YOUR STORY.
I'D TALK BETTER ON A FULL TANK.
MAYBE YOU WANT A WASH AND WAX, TOO!
GARA
THANKS, BUT I'M IN A RUSH.
SWELL.
LUCKILY, I DO HAVE A KEY THAT UNLOCKS THE PUMPS IN ANY OF MY GAS STATIONS.
AHH... I FEEL BETTER ALREADY.
BLACKR
THANK YOU, G.B.!
YOU'RE WEL -- HEY, I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE TWO OF YOU!
YES, THAT'S BLASTER.
UH, H-HI...
BLACKROCK
BLACKROCK

BLASTER AND I HAVE LEFT THE AUTOBOTS, AND OUR HOME, THE ARK.
WE HAVE A NEW LEADER--GRIMLOCK--BUT WE'VE DECIDED WE WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE FIGHTING DECEPTICONS ON OUR OWN!
YEAH, GRIMLOCK'S A MECHANICAL MORON.
SO YOU GUYS ARE DESERTERS.
WE PREFER TO THINK OF OURSELVES AS "INDEPENDENT-MINDED".
I KNEW FROM OUR PREVIOUS ENCOUNTERS THAT YOU HAD A PENCHANT FOR EATING AT THE BEST RESTAURANTS IN PORTLAND, SO YOU WERE EASY TO FIND.
SO WE TRACKED YOU DOWN... TO ASK FOR YOUR HELP.
MY HELP, EH? Y'KNOW I DON'T LIKE DECEPTICONS EITHER--THEY'VE CERTAINLY CAUSED ME A LOT OF GRIEF IN THE PAST--BUT WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU?
YOU, GOLDBUG--YOU DON'T LOOK THE SAME, AND I NEVER EVEN MET THIS GUY BEFORE!
ARE YOU SAYING I'M SOFT ON DECEPS, HUMAN?
"BACK ON MY HOME WORLD OF CYBERTRON MY PARTNER, SCROUNGE, AND I SPENT ALL OUR TIME HUNTING THOSE TIN-PLATED DEVILS.
"SCROUNGE WASN'T MUCH OF A WARRIOR, BUT HE HAD A FUEL PUMP AS BIG AS A PLANET.
"I HAD TO WATCH SCROUNGE DIE--ALL BECAUSE DEFEATING THE DECEPS WAS MORE IMPORTANT. *
* SEE TRANSFORMERS #17.
"NO AMOUNT OF DECEPS I DESTROY'LL EVER BRING MY LITTLE BUDDY BACK... BUT IT'S THE BEST I CAN DO FOR HIM IN THE MEAN TIME.
"AND IT'S ALL I CAN DO. ALL I WANT TO DO."
YOU--YOU WATCHED A FELLOW AUTOBOT DIE, BLASTER? AND DID NOTHING?
I HAD NO CHOICE, GOLDBUG. SOMETIMES WAR FORCES YOU TO DO THINGS YOU'LL HATE YOURSELF FOR AS LONG AS YOU LIVE!
ER, GUYS...


IF YOU THINK I'LL ABANDON YOU TO DIE, TOO, WHY DON'T YOU RUN BACK TO GRIMLOCK ALREADY?
BLASTER, I DIDN'T MEAN--
HEY, FELLAS, LISTEN--I'M A BUSY MAN. WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
INFORMATION, G.B. INFORMATION THAT'LL LEAD US TO THE DECEPTICONS.
WE KNOW THAT. AS THE HEAD OF A LARGE INDUSTRIAL EMPIRE, YOU MUST HAVE ACCESS TO ALL SORTS OF INFORMATION.
WELL, THAT'S TRUE. HAVING HAD DEALINGS WITH THE DECEPTICONS IN THE PAST, I PAY ATTENTION TO ANY DEVELOPMENT THAT MAY BE RELATED TO THEM.
THERE'S BEEN SOME SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY IN THE CARIBBEAN LATELY, INVOLVING MISSING OIL TANKERS, BUT THAT'S RATHER FAR FROM HERE.
OH--THERE WAS THAT LARGE METEOR THAT CRASHED IN NORTHERN ARIZONA YESTERDAY...
SURELY YOUR PLANET'S HAD METEORS BEFORE.
WELL, YES, BUT THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT.
THIS ONE SEEMS TO BE SENDING RADIO SIGNALS. THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS AWARE OF THE METEOR, BUT NOT THE SIGNALS.
MAYBE A DECEPTICON SPACECRAFT...
...COMMUNICATING WITH CYBERTRON!
WORTH CHECKING INTO!
LET'S ROLL OUT!
HUH--?
HEY, FELLAS--HOLD UP!
GE
TUNE-UP
TRANSMISSION
TIRES
HOW ABOUT A RIDE HOME FIRST?

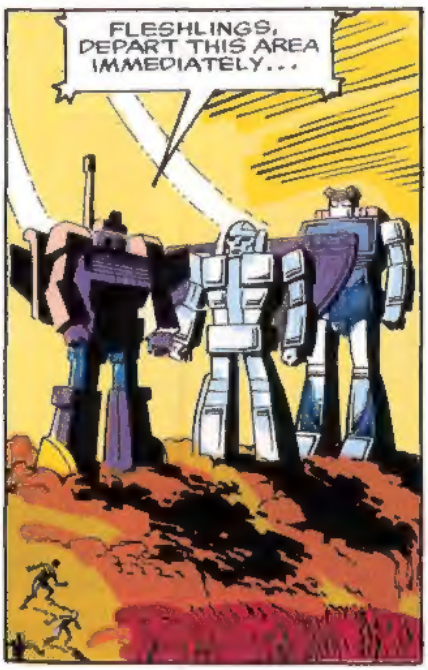

LATER, SEVERAL DOZEN LIGHT-YEARS AWAY, ON THE PLANET CYBERTRON, HOME OF THE TRANSFORMERS...
...WITHIN THE PLUSH OFFICES OF CHIEF DECEPTICON FUEL AUDITOR RATBAT...
I'VE CALLED YOU TRIPLE CHANGERS HERE TODAY TO HELP ME WITH A SITUATION OF GRAVE CONCERN.
AND WHAT IS THAT, RATBAT?
AS YOU KNOW, ASTROTRAIN, OUR BROTHER DECEPTICONS' OPERATION ON THE PLANET EARTH HAS BEEN VERY ENERGY-EXPENSIVE.
RECENTLY, I SENT A PACKAGE THERE VIA LOW ENERGY-COST SPACE FREIGHTER AS PHASE ONE OF MY NEW EARTH FUEL ECONOMY PLAN.
APPARENTLY, SOMETHING WENT WRONG. THE FREIGHTER'S PILOT HAS NOT CONTACTED ME UPON ARRIVAL, AS PER OUR CONTRACT, ALTHOUGH RADIO SIGNALS INDICATE THE PACKAGE DID ARRIVE.
THE BOTTOM LINE OF THIS ENTERPRISE IS THREATENED!
THEREFORE, ALTHOUGH ITS USE IS HIGHLY ENERGY-CONSUMPTIVE, I AM COMPELLED TO RE-OPEN THE SPACE-BRIDGE AND COMMISSION YOU THREE TO FIND THE PACKAGE AND BRING IT ON LINE.
AND REMEMBER, AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUR MISSION IS TO--
WE KNOW-- LOCATE AND ENLIST THE AID OF A FLESHLING...
NOT JUST ANY FLESHLING, BLITZWING-- ONE WITH LOTS OF WHAT FLESHLINGS CALL "BUCKS."
AND DON'T FORGET, OCTANE, PREFERABLY ONE WHO'S SOMEHOW CONNECTED WITH EARTH'S AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY.
I'M NOT FILLING YOUR TANKS TO LISTEN TO YOU TALK! GO!
TIME IS FUEL!
AND, AS THE THREE DECEPTICONS DEPART FOR THE SPACE BRIDGE...

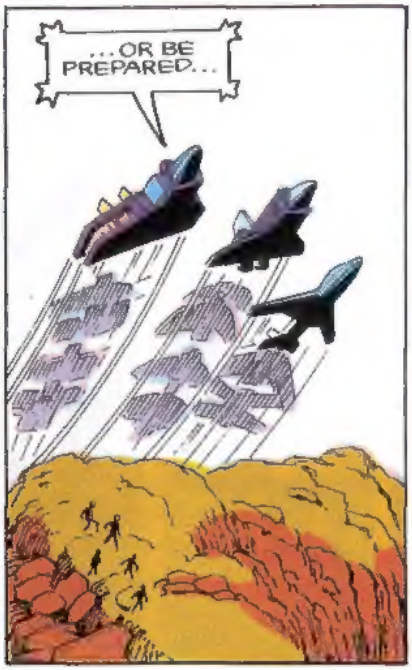

... BACK ON EARTH A SMALL GROUP OF RESEARCH SCIENTISTS, LED BY DR. WALTER HUDDLESTON AND WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ARRIVES AT THE CRATER TO INVESTIGATE ITS MYSTERIOUS CONTENTS...
ANY FINAL MAGNETIC READINGS YET?
RADIATION LEVELS APPEAR HIGHER THAN NORMAL, BUT WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS.
WHEN DO WE GET TO CLIMB DOWN IN THERE, DR. HUDDLESTON?
WHEN I'VE DETERMINED IT'S SAFE, MR. FONG, AND NOT A MOMENT SOONER.
AS SCIENTISTS, WE WAIT HUNDREDS OF YEARS FOR AN OPPORTUNITY SUCH AS THIS. WE CAN AFFORD TO WAIT A FEW MORE DAYS.

I SUPPOSE...
IMPATIENCE AND AMBITION ARE NOT VIRTUES IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, MR. FONG! CAREFUL TESTING AND ANALYSIS ARE! REMEMBER THAT!

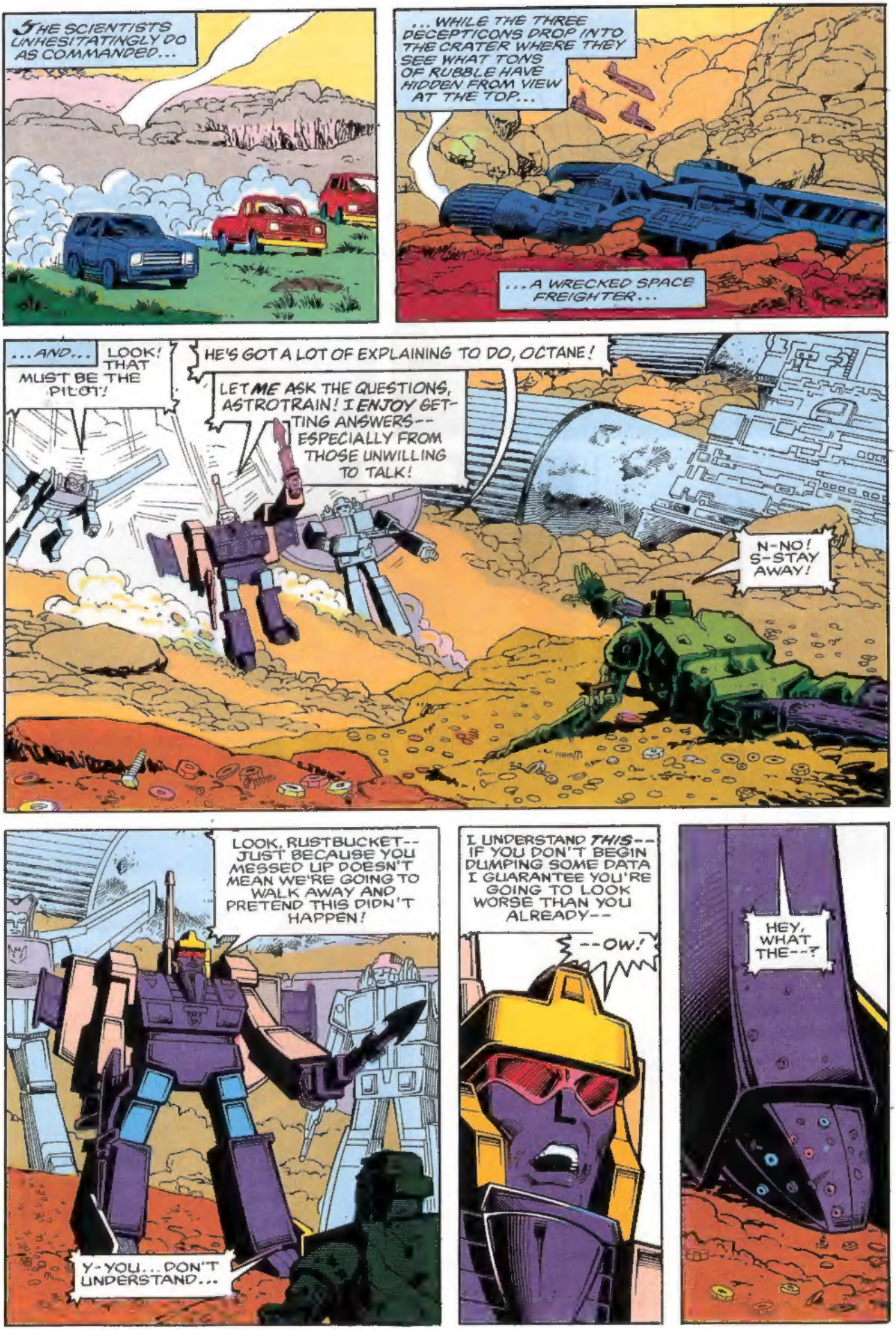
DOCTOR--LOOK!
I-I SEE IT!

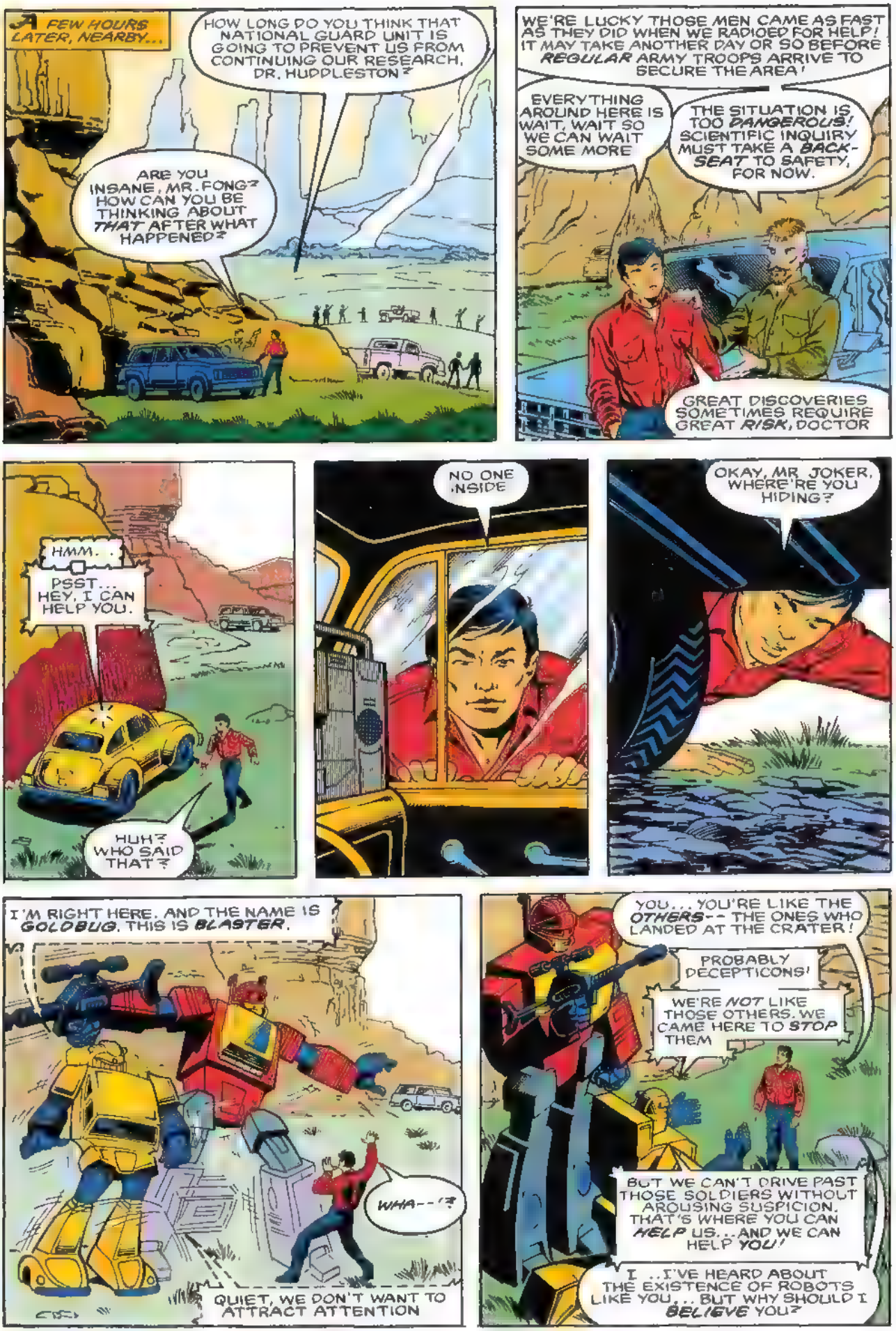
A--A BRIDGE!
IT APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE!
LOOK--THREE SHAPES ARE MATERIALIZING ON IT!


FLESHLINGS, DEPART THIS AREA IMMEDIATELY...


...OR BE PREPARED...

...TO BE BURIED HERE!


THE SCIENTISTS UNHESITATINGLY DO AS COMMANDED...
...WHILE THE THREE DECEPTICONS DROP INTO THE CRATER WHERE THEY SEE WHAT TONS OF RUBBLE HAVE HIDDEN FROM VIEW AT THE TOP...
...A WRECKED SPACE FREIGHTER...
...AND... LOOK! THAT MUST BE THE PILOT!
HE'S GOT A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO, OCTANE!
LET ME ASK THE QUESTIONS, ASTROTRAIN! I ENJOY GETTING ANSWERS-- ESPECIALLY FROM THOSE UNWILLING TO TALK!
N-NO! S-STAY AWAY!
LOOK, RUSTBUCKET-- JUST BECAUSE YOU MESSED UP DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE GOING TO WALK AWAY AND PRETEND THIS DIDN'T HAPPEN!
Y-YOU... DON'T UNDERSTAND...
I UNDERSTAND THIS-- IF YOU DON'T BEGIN DUMPING SOME DATA I GUARANTEE YOU'RE GOING TO LOOK WORSE THAN YOU ALREADY--
--OW!
HEY, WHAT THE--?


A FEW HOURS LATER, NEARBY...
HOW LONG DO YOU THINK THAT NATIONAL GUARD UNIT IS GOING TO PREVENT US FROM CONTINUING OUR RESEARCH, DR. HUDDLESTON?
ARE YOU INSANE, MR. FONG? HOW CAN YOU BE THINKING ABOUT THAT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED?
WE'RE LUCKY THOSE MEN CAME AS FAST AS THEY DID WHEN WE RADIOED FOR HELP! IT MAY TAKE ANOTHER DAY OR SO BEFORE REGULAR ARMY TROOPS ARRIVE TO SECURE THE AREA!
EVERYTHING AROUND HERE IS WAIT, WAIT SO WE CAN WAIT SOME MORE
THE SITUATION IS TOO DANGEROUS! SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY MUST TAKE A BACK-SEAT TO SAFETY, FOR NOW.
GREAT DISCOVERIES SOMETIMES REQUIRE GREAT RISK, DOCTOR
HMM. .
PSST... HEY, I CAN HELP YOU.
HUH? WHO SAID THAT?
NO ONE INSIDE
OKAY, MR. JOKER, WHERE'RE YOU HIDING?
I'M RIGHT HERE, AND THE NAME IS GOLDBUG. THIS IS BLASTER.
WHA--!?
QUIET, WE DON'T WANT TO ATTRACT ATTENTION
YOU... YOU'RE LIKE THE OTHERS-- THE ONES WHO LANDED AT THE CRATER!
PROBABLY DECEPTICONS!
WE'RE NOT LIKE THOSE OTHERS. WE CAME HERE TO STOP THEM
BUT WE CAN'T DRIVE PAST THOSE SOLDIERS WITHOUT AROUSING SUSPICION. THAT'S WHERE YOU CAN HELP US... AND WE CAN HELP YOU!
I ..I'VE HEARD ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF ROBOTS LIKE YOU... BUT WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU?

BECAUSE, OBVIOUSLY I COULD FORCE YOU TO HELP US IF I WANTED TO. BUT I WON'T. I'M NOT THAT KIND OF ROBOT.
Y-YOU'VE GOT A POINT THERE, I SUPPOSE. UH... THE NAME IS CHARLES FONG. CALL ME CHARLIE.
SOON, AFTER CHARLIE HAS DRIVEN GOLDBUG TO THE NATIONAL GUARD CHECKPOINT...
HOLD IT, SIR. NONE ALLOWED BEYOND HERE. EVEN YOU AUTHORIZED SCIENTIST-TYPES YOU'D BE SAFER HIDING BEHIND YOUR COMPUTERS
BUT LIEUTENANT, I WANT TO HELP
I'VE ADAPTED THIS MICRO-SEISMOMETER TO DETECT THE MOVEMENTS OF THE ROBOTS IN THE CRATER, IF IT CAN BE PUT CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE RIM.
WE'D HAVE ADVANCE NOTICE IF THEY'RE ABOUT TO DO ANYTHING.
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE A PORTABLE TAPE DECK.
YES, IT'S AMAZING WHAT MODERN SCIENCE CAN DO THESE DAYS, ISN'T IT.
MY ORDERS ARE NO ONE, INCLUDING MYSELF AND MY SOLDIERS, GOES NEAR THE CRATER
LIVES MAY BE AT STAKE HERE, LIEUTENANT.
WELL, I SUPPOSE I COULD PRETEND NOT TO SEE YOU...
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T BE LONG.
HEY, BE CAREFUL, OKAY?
HMPH THAT LITTLE GUY MUST BE THE BRAVEST MAN I EVER MET-- THINKING ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE'S SAFETY AND NOT A BIT ABOUT HIS OWN.
WHO'D HAVE GUESSED?
AND SEVERAL THOUSAND FEET AWAY...
THIS IS GREAT! I HAVE THE WHOLE CRATER TO MYSELF! I'LL BE FAMOUS!
YOU'LL BE DEAD IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL, CHARLIE!

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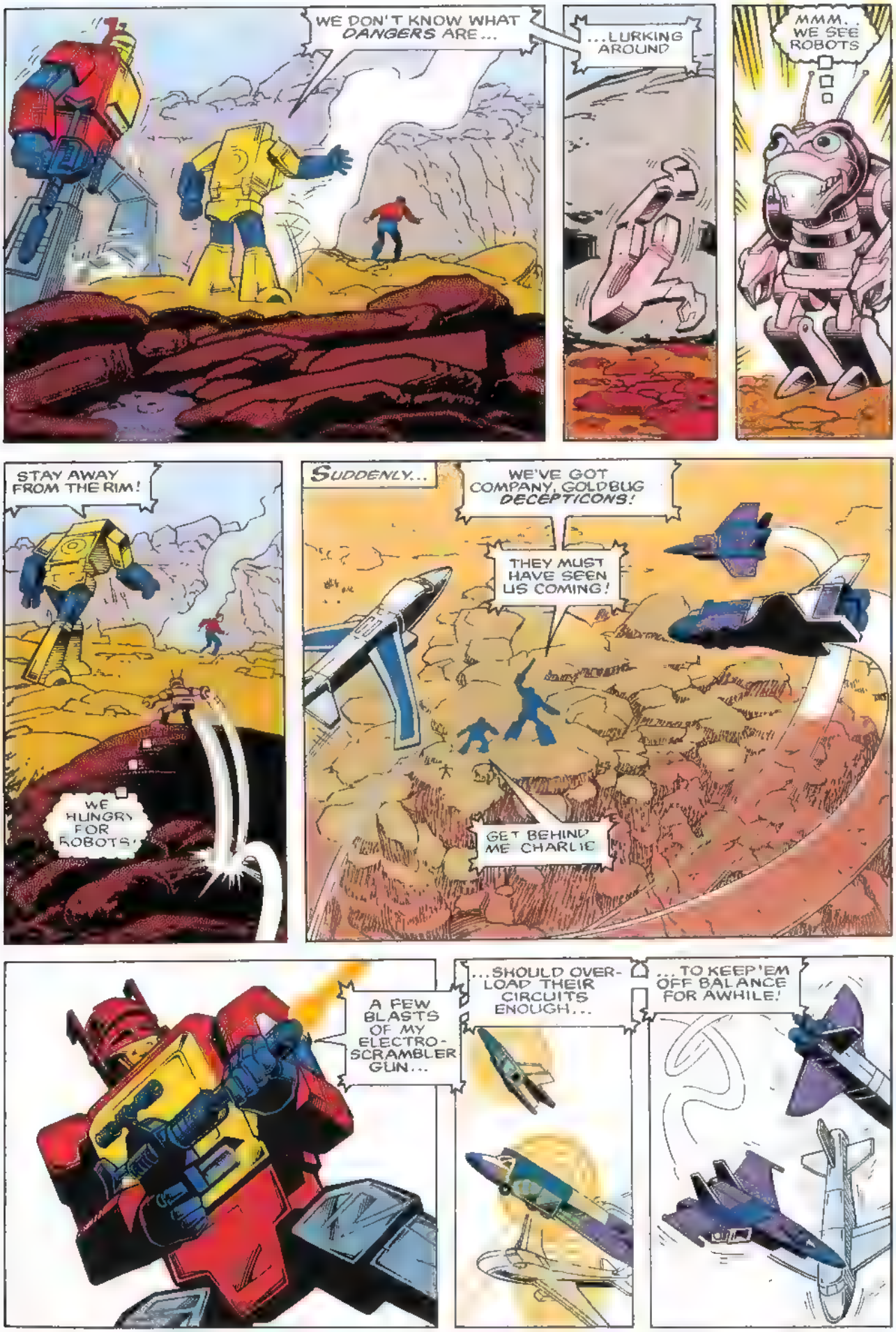
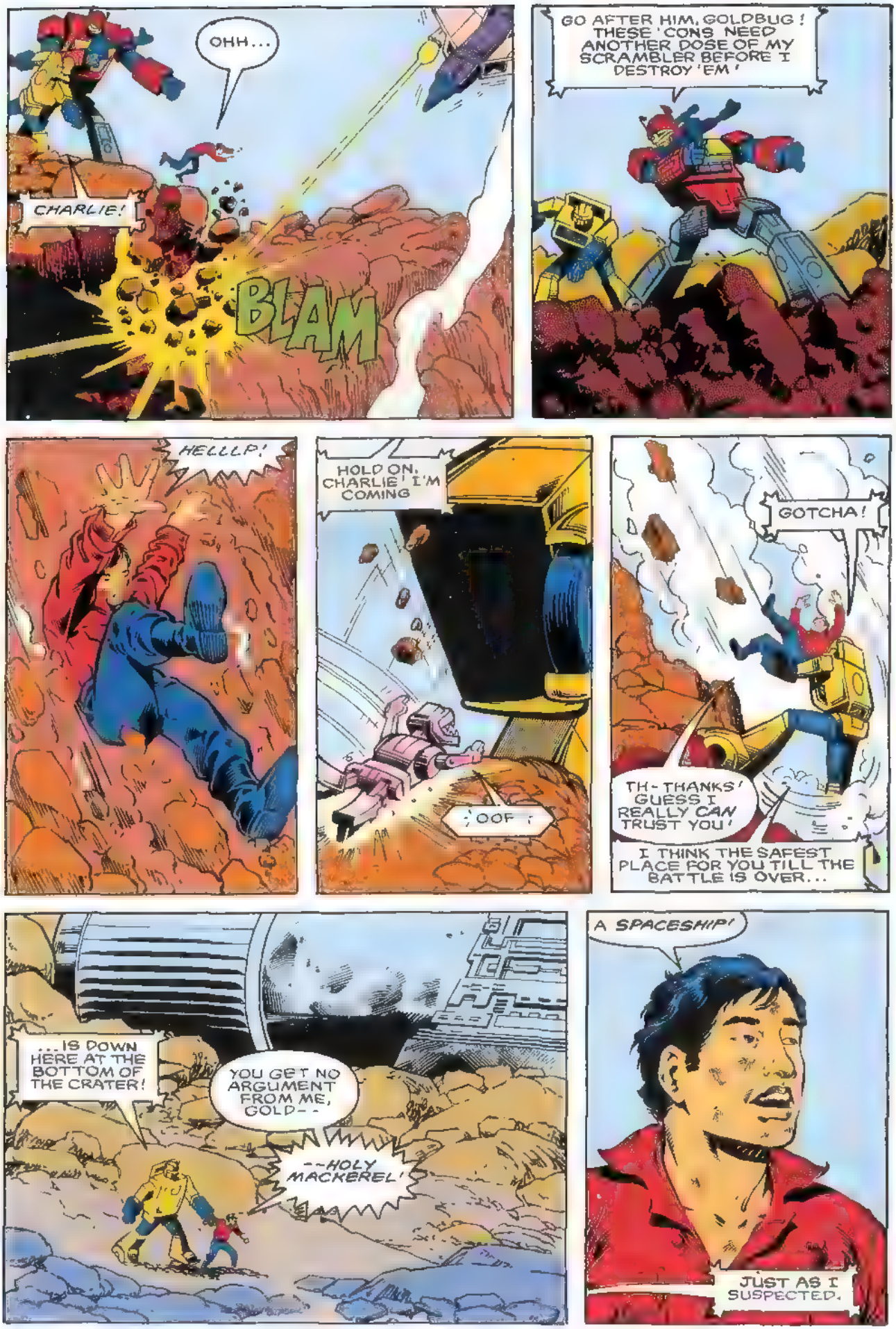
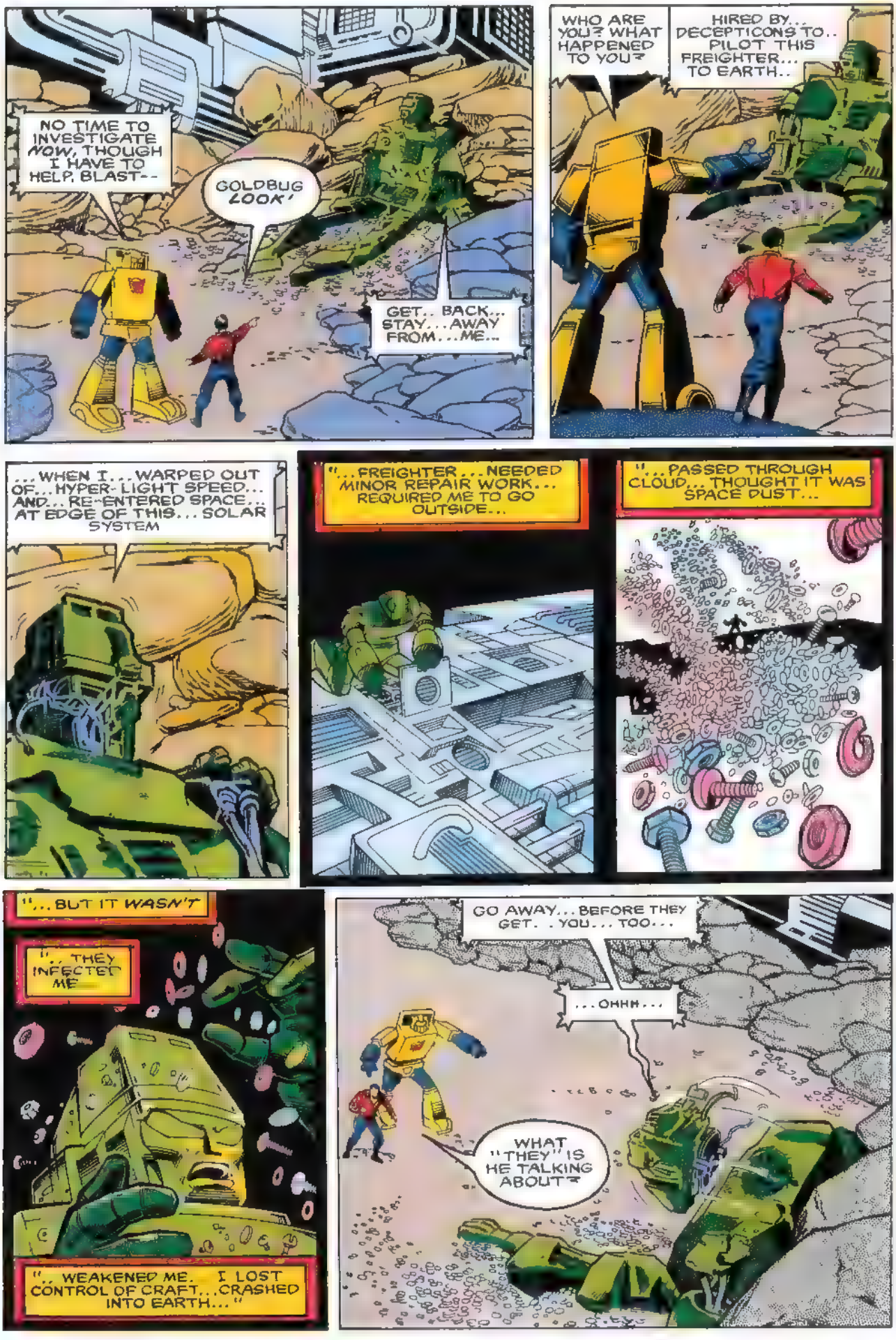
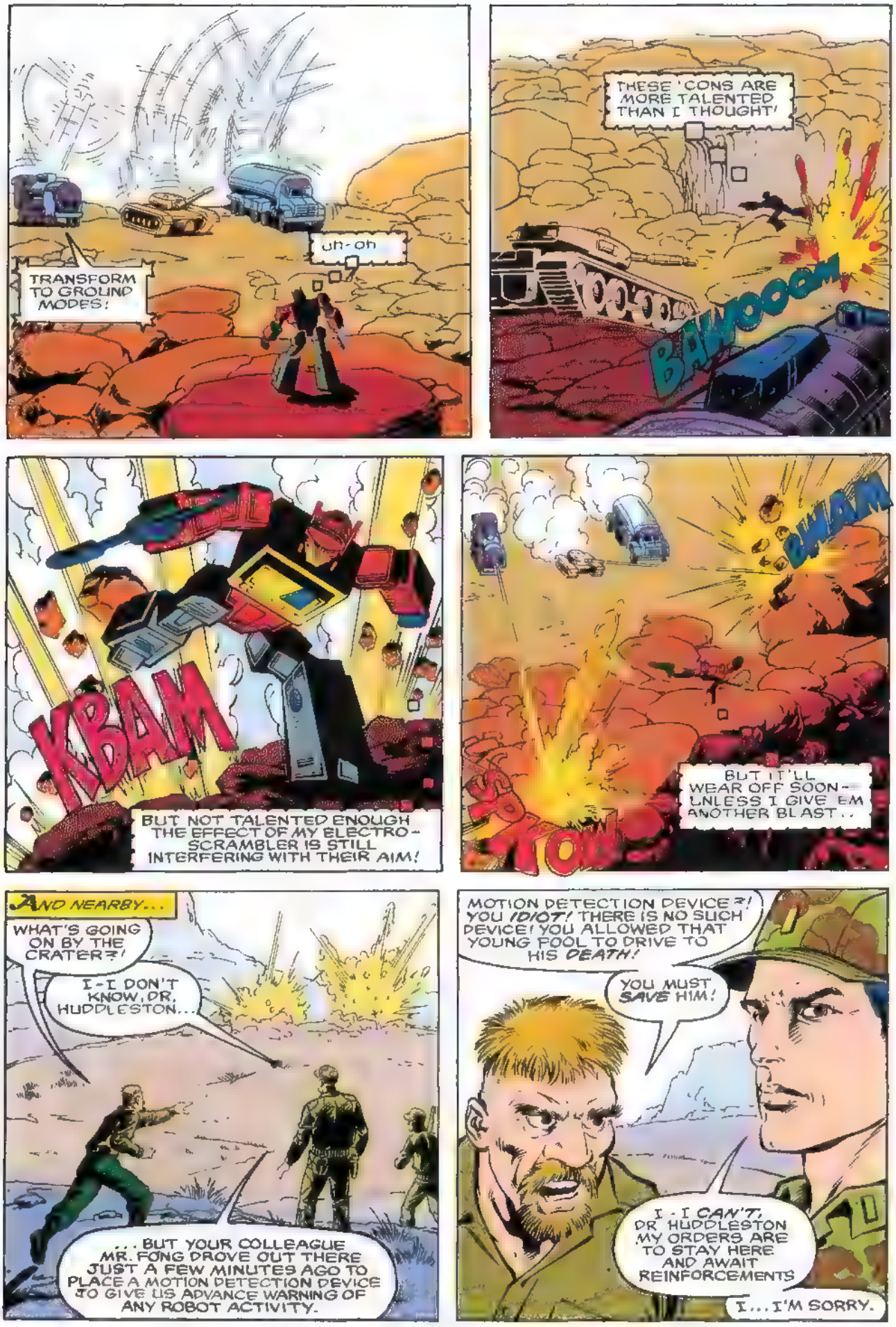
SCRAPPED BY THE SCRAPLETS!

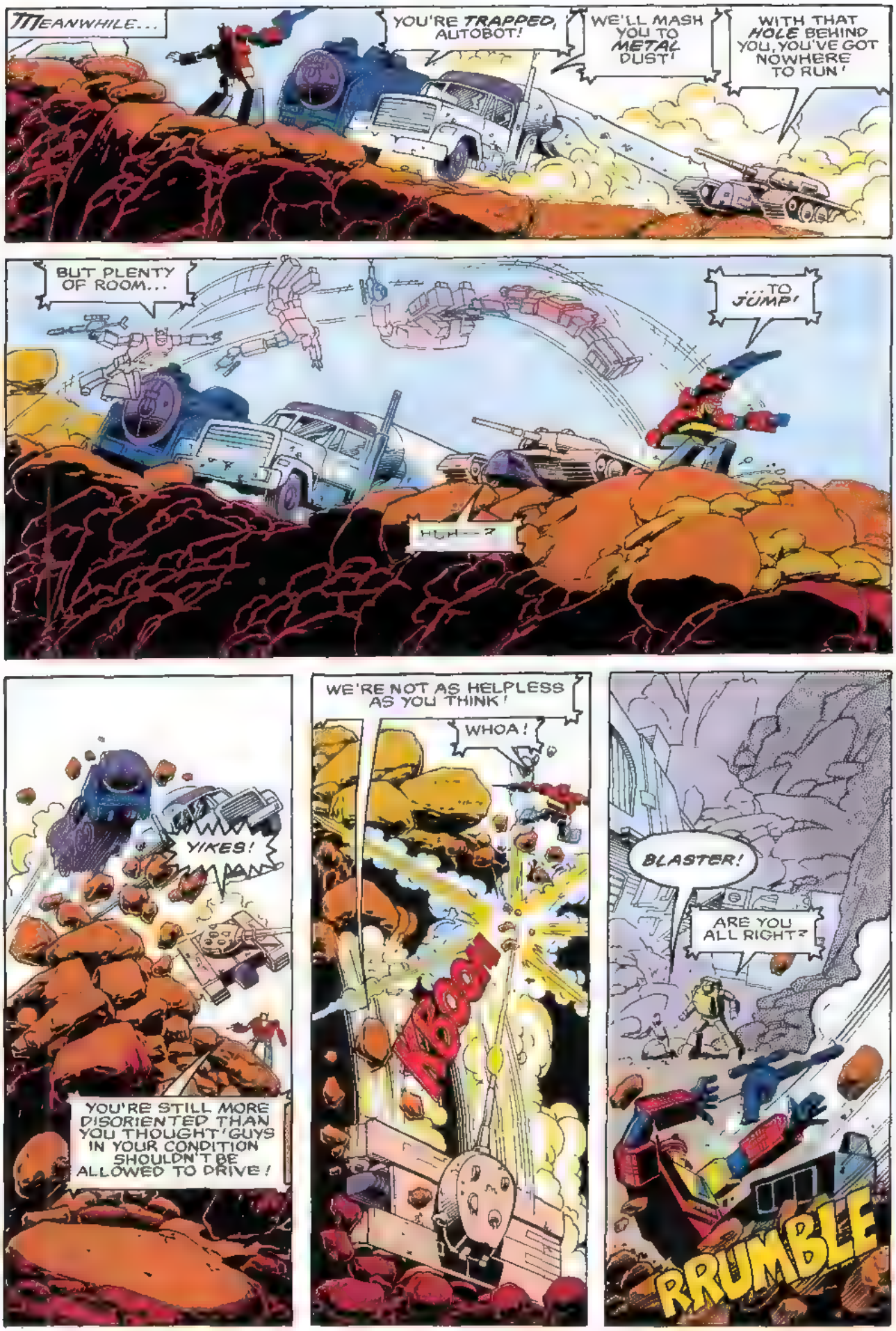

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT DANGERS ARE...
...LURKING AROUND
MMM.. WE SEE ROBOTS
STAY AWAY FROM THE RIM!
WE HUNGRY FOR ROBOTS!
SUDDENLY...
WE'VE GOT COMPANY, GOLDBUG DECEPTICONS!
THEY MUST HAVE SEEN US COMING!
GET BEHIND ME CHARLIE
A FEW BLASTS OF MY ELECTRO-SCRAMBLER GUN...
...SHOULD OVER-LOAD THEIR CIRCUITS ENOUGH...
...TO KEEP 'EM OFF BALANCE FOR AWHILE!

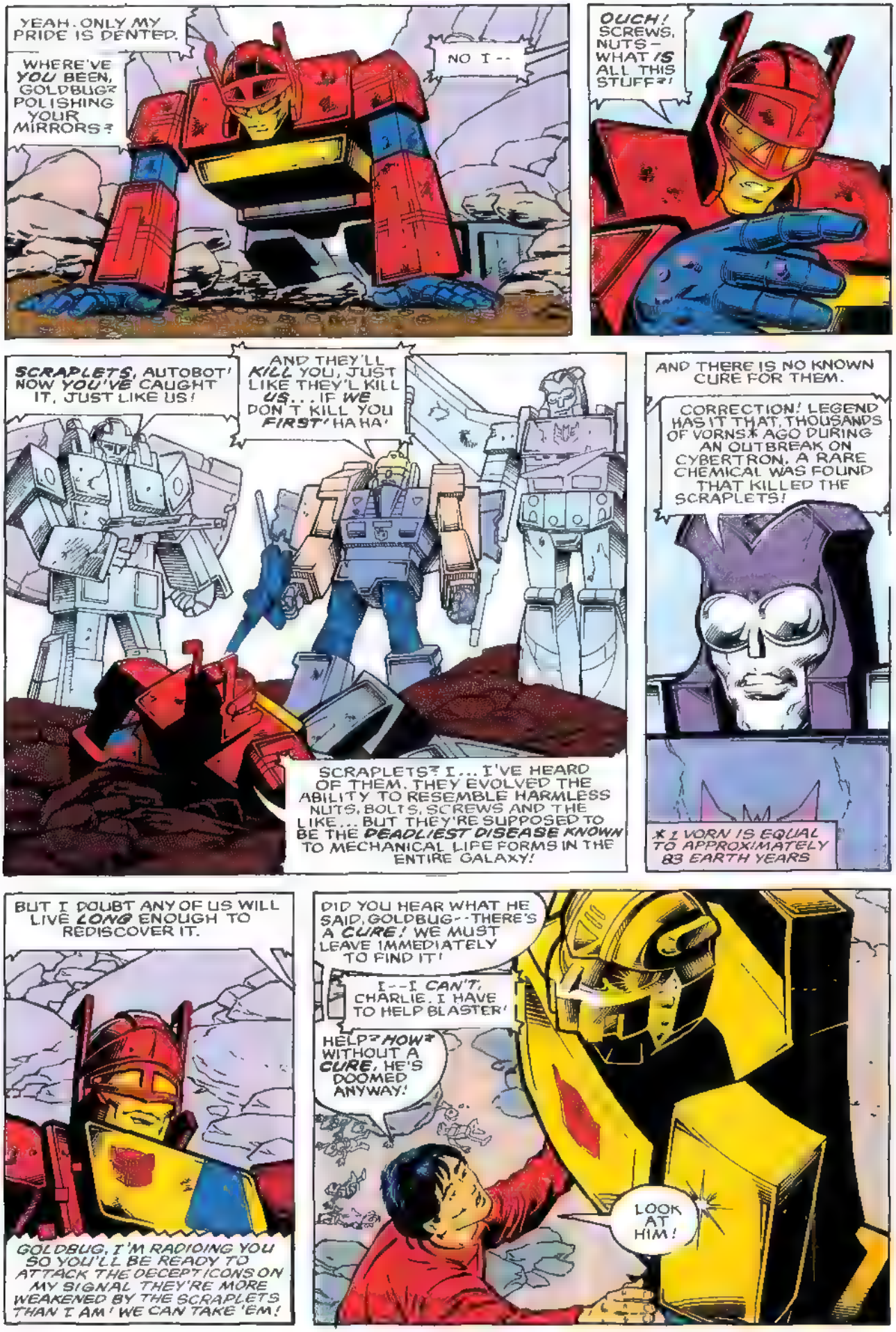

OHH...
CHARLIE!
BLAM
GO AFTER HIM, GOLDBUG! THESE 'CONS NEED ANOTHER DOSE OF MY SCRAMBLER BEFORE I DESTROY 'EM!
HELLLP!
HOLD ON, CHARLIE! I'M COMING
OOF
GOTCHA!
TH-THANKS! GUESS I REALLY CAN TRUST YOU!
I THINK THE SAFEST PLACE FOR YOU TILL THE BATTLE IS OVER...
...IS DOWN HERE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CRATER!
YOU GET NO ARGUMENT FROM ME, GOLD--
--HOLY MACKEREL!
A SPACESHIP!
JUST AS I SUSPECTED.


NO TIME TO INVESTIGATE NOW, THOUGH I HAVE TO HELP. BLAST--
GOLDBUG LOOK!
GET.. BACK... STAY...AWAY FROM...ME...
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
HIRED BY.. DECEPTICONS TO.. PILOT THIS FREIGHTER... TO EARTH..
...WHEN I...WARPED OUT OF...HYPER-LIGHT SPEED... AND...RE-ENTERED SPACE... AT EDGE OF THIS... SOLAR SYSTEM
"...FREIGHTER...NEEDED MINOR REPAIR WORK... REQUIRED ME TO GO OUTSIDE...
"...PASSED THROUGH CLOUD... THOUGHT IT WAS SPACE DUST...
"...BUT IT WASN'T
"... THEY INFECTED ME
"... WEAKENED ME. I LOST CONTROL OF CRAFT...CRASHED INTO EARTH..."
GO AWAY...BEFORE THEY GET. . YOU... TOO...
...OHHH...
WHAT "THEY" IS HE TALKING ABOUT?

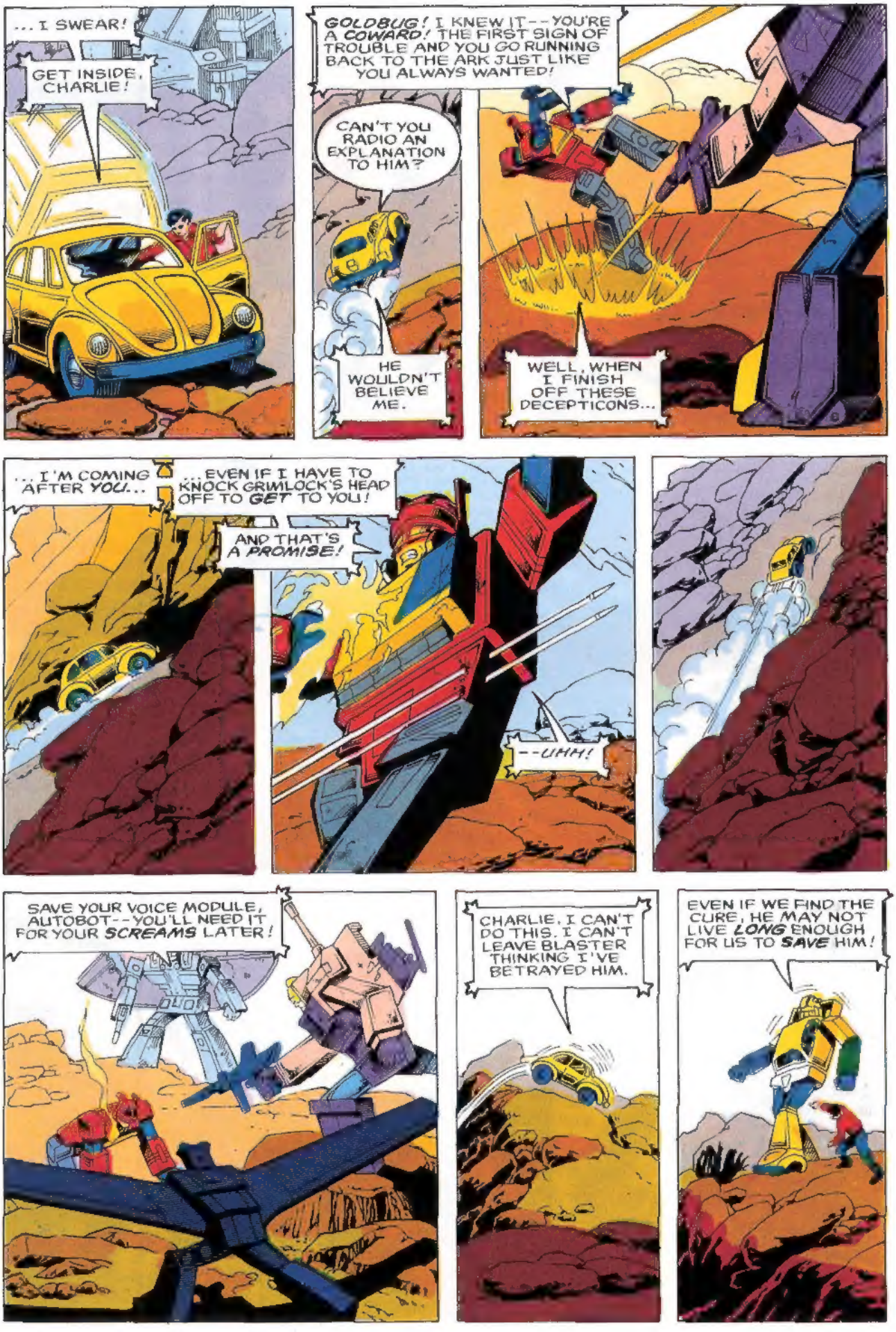
HE MUST MEAN THEM! LOOK!
HUH?!
WHATEVER THEY ARE, THEY DON'T SEEM INTERESTED IN HUMANS, GOLDBUG! THEY'RE ALL HEADED FOR YOU!
BUT THEY'LL HAVE TO GET BY ME FIRST!
CHEW ON THIS, ROBO-ROACHES!
PUNCH
MY PAL GOLDBUG IS NOT ON THE MENU!
AND...
WE'VE LOST TOO MUCH CONTROL! WE CAN CRASH TOO EASILY IN THESE MODES!


TRANSFORM TO GROUND MODES!
uh-oh
THESE 'CONS ARE MORE TALENTED THAN I THOUGHT!
BAWOOM
KBAM
BUT NOT TALENTED ENOUGH THE EFFECT OF MY ELECTRO-SCRAMBLER IS STILL INTERFERING WITH THEIR AIM!
KWAM
BUT IT'LL WEAR OFF SOON— UNLESS I GIVE 'EM ANOTHER BLAST..
AND NEARBY...
WHAT'S GOING ON BY THE CRATER?!
I-I DON'T KNOW, DR. HUDDLESTON...
...BUT YOUR COLLEAGUE MR. FONG DROVE OUT THERE JUST A FEW MINUTES AGO TO PLACE A MOTION DETECTION DEVICE TO GIVE US ADVANCE WARNING OF ANY ROBOT ACTIVITY.
MOTION DETECTION DEVICE?! YOU *IDIOT!* THERE IS NO SUCH DEVICE! YOU ALLOWED THAT YOUNG FOOL TO DRIVE TO HIS *DEATH!*
YOU MUST *SAVE* HIM!
I-I *CAN'T*, DR HUDDLESTON MY ORDERS ARE TO STAY HERE AND AWAIT REINFORCEMENTS
I...I'M SORRY.

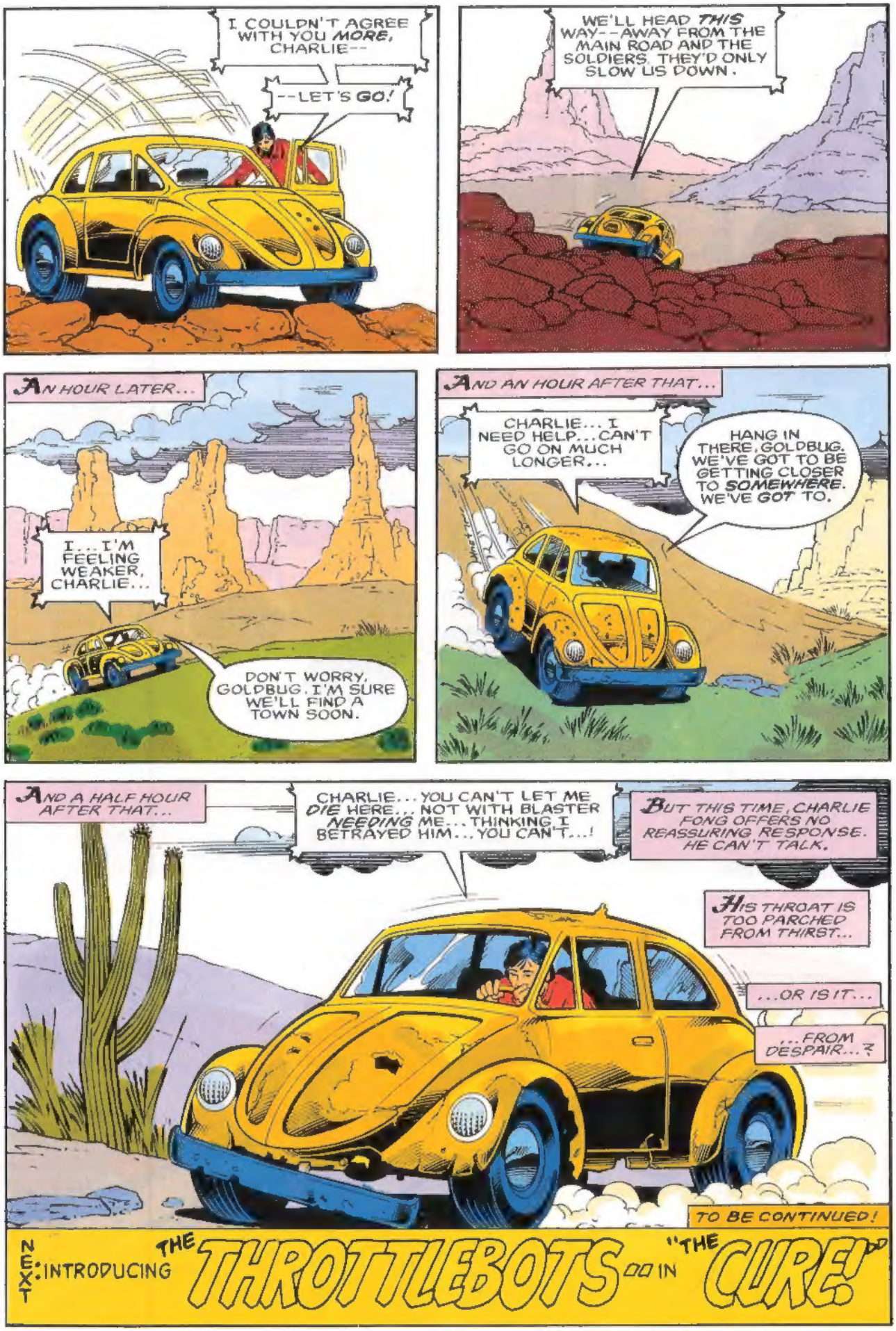

MEANWHILE...
YOU'RE TRAPPED, AUTOBOT!
WE'LL MASH YOU TO METAL DUST!
WITH THAT HOLE BEHIND YOU, YOU'VE GOT NOWHERE TO RUN!
BUT PLENTY OF ROOM...
...TO JUMP!
HUH--?
YIKES!
YOU'RE STILL MORE DISORIENTED THAN YOU THOUGHT! GUYS IN YOUR CONDITION SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO DRIVE!
WE'RE NOT AS HELPLESS AS YOU THINK!
WHOA!
KABOOM
BLASTER!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
RRUMBLE


YEAH. ONLY MY PRIDE IS DENTED.
WHERE'VE YOU BEEN, GOLDBUG? POLISHING YOUR MIRRORS?
NO I --
OUCH! SCREWS, NUTS — WHAT IS ALL THIS STUFF?!
SCRAPLETS, AUTOBOT! NOW YOU'VE CAUGHT IT, JUST LIKE US!
AND THEY'LL KILL YOU, JUST LIKE THEY'L KILL US... IF WE DON'T KILL YOU FIRST! HA HA!
SCRAPLETS? I... I'VE HEARD OF THEM. THEY EVOLVED THE ABILITY TO RESEMBLE HARMLESS NUTS, BOLTS, SCREWS AND THE LIKE... BUT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE DEADLIEST DISEASE KNOWN TO MECHANICAL LIFE FORMS IN THE ENTIRE GALAXY!
AND THERE IS NO KNOWN CURE FOR THEM.
CORRECTION! LEGEND HAS IT THAT, THOUSANDS OF VORNS* AGO DURING AN OUTBREAK ON CYBERTRON, A RARE CHEMICAL WAS FOUND THAT KILLED THE SCRAPLETS!
* 1 VORN IS EQUAL TO APPROXIMATELY 83 EARTH YEARS
BUT I DOUBT ANY OF US WILL LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO REDISCOVER IT.
GOLDBUG, I'M RADIOING YOU SO YOU'LL BE READY TO ATTACK THE DECEPTICONS ON MY SIGNAL. THEY'RE MORE WEAKENED BY THE SCRAPLETS THAN I AM! WE CAN TAKE 'EM!
DID YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID, GOLDBUG -- THERE'S A CURE! WE MUST LEAVE IMMEDIATELY TO FIND IT!
I -- I CAN'T, CHARLIE. I HAVE TO HELP BLASTER!
HELP? HOW? WITHOUT A CURE, HE'S DOOMED ANYWAY!
LOOK AT HIM!

YOU--YOU'RE RIGHT! THE DISEASE IS FAIRLY WIDESPREAD ALREADY!
IF YOU STAY HERE TO HELP YOU'LL ONLY CATCH THE DISEASE YOURSELF!
BUT I CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM HERE TO DIE!
OKAY, GOLDBUG--
NOW!
YOU FOOL! YOU'RE ONLY GUARANTEEING YOURSELF A QUICKER DEATH!
OHH!
WHAK
NOW THAT I'VE GOT MY ELECTRO-SCRAMBLER BACK...
...I WOULDN'T BE TOO SURE OF ANYTHING IF I WERE YOU!
HEY, GOLDBUG, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!
GET YOURSELF IN GEAR AND OVER HERE!
WE'LL TAKE BACK THIS ONE I CRUSHED FOR EXPERIMENTATION.
BUT, BLASTER--
FORGET, BLASTER! WITHOUT A CURE, HE'S AS GOOD AS DEAD!
GOLDBUG! BY THE PRIME MATRIX ITSELF, WHERE ARE YOU?!
FORGIVE ME, BLASTER-- I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU...


...I SWEAR!
GET INSIDE, CHARLIE!
GOLDBUG! I KNEW IT--YOU'RE A COWARD! THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE AND YOU GO RUNNING BACK TO THE ARK JUST LIKE YOU ALWAYS WANTED!
CAN'T YOU RADIO AN EXPLANATION TO HIM?
HE WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME.
WELL, WHEN I FINISH OFF THESE DECEPTICONS...
...I'M COMING AFTER YOU...
...EVEN IF I HAVE TO KNOCK GRIMLOCK'S HEAD OFF TO GET TO YOU!
AND THAT'S A PROMISE!
--UHH!
SAVE YOUR VOICE MODULE, AUTOBOT--YOU'LL NEED IT FOR YOUR SCREAMS LATER!
CHARLIE, I CAN'T DO THIS. I CAN'T LEAVE BLASTER THINKING I'VE BETRAYED HIM.
EVEN IF WE FIND THE CURE, HE MAY NOT LIVE LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO SAVE HIM!

LOOK, YOU HAVEN'T A CHOICE.
WE SEE BIG ROBOT!
THE LONGER WE ARGUE ABOUT IT...
...WE HUNGRY...
... THE WORSE HIS CHANCES!
...WE EAT!
OUCH!
KLUNK
GOLDBUG--!
I...I SEE IT, TOO, CHARLIE--A SCRAPLET!
DON'T WORRY, STAY CALM! I'LL GET IT OFF YOU!
UH I.... I CAN'T! ITS GRIP IS TOO STRONG!
HUH?
IT...IT'S REPLICATING! NOW THERE ARE TWO!
WE'D BETTER GET MOVING--BEFORE IT SPREADS EVEN FURTHER!


I COULDN'T AGREE WITH YOU MORE, CHARLIE--
--LET'S GO!
WE'LL HEAD THIS WAY--AWAY FROM THE MAIN ROAD AND THE SOLDIERS. THEY'D ONLY SLOW US DOWN.
AN HOUR LATER...
I... I'M FEELING WEAKER, CHARLIE...
DON'T WORRY, GOLDBUG. I'M SURE WE'LL FIND A TOWN SOON.
AND AN HOUR AFTER THAT...
CHARLIE... I NEED HELP... CAN'T GO ON MUCH LONGER...
HANG IN THERE, GOLDBUG. WE'VE GOT TO BE GETTING CLOSER TO SOMEWHERE. WE'VE GOT TO.
AND A HALF HOUR AFTER THAT...
CHARLIE... YOU CAN'T LET ME DIE HERE... NOT WITH BLASTER NEEDING ME... THINKING I BETRAYED HIM... YOU CAN'T...!
BUT THIS TIME, CHARLIE FONG OFFERS NO REASSURING RESPONSE. HE CAN'T TALK.
HIS THROAT IS TOO PARCHED FROM THIRST...
...OR IS IT...
...FROM DESPAIR...?
TO BE CONTINUED!
NEXT: INTRODUCING THE THROTTLEBOTS IN "THE CURE!"